

The Richlands Town Council held a "Workshop" on August 23rd, 2022, in the Richlands Council Chambers at 6:00 pm with the following present:

Mayor: Rod D. Cury

Town Manager: John O'Daniel

Town Clerk: Rebekah Hackworth

Council Members: Doug Ratliff, Jeff Hurst, Rick Woods, Kristen Thompson-Whitt, Seth White, and Laura Mollo.

Town Attorney: Michael Thomas

Mayor Cury opened the meeting.

Kristen Thompson-Whitt gave the invocation.

Mayor Cury led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Cury- We have before us the agenda and there has been a request to alter the order of the agenda, no deletions/additions to the agenda just alter the order. So, I will entertain a motion to do so.

Doug- I make a motion to move the dispatch discussion to the first part of the meeting instead of at the end. Jeff seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Mayor Cury- First up, we have the dispatch discussion. John, would you like to introduce that?

John- So, there is a memo being passed around. Essentially, we need some kind of direction. From what we are hearing, council wants us to move in the direction of having the dispatch go from the Richland Police Department to the Sheriff's Department and be handled by them. This isn't a quick process, so we wanted to have a timeline. We all kind of have an understanding of what is going to happen. I met with the sheriff this morning; I have this memo which is kind of a timeline of how we think things will go. We are hoping that it goes quicker but essentially if you look in here within the next three months, you would like to get a new police chief. I think it is going to be beneficial to have somebody in that position to help with this transition versus bringing them in, in the middle. However, in the next three months, we will you start doing some of the radio testing and some of the cross training of bringing some of their dispatchers down here to work with ours to help ease that transition. However, we want to discuss this tentative timeline and then we wanted to have a discussion and get some direction on what it will look like going forward.

Does council want us to keep the PD open 24 hours with someone there? They wouldn't be dispatchers but there would be some administrative staff, so that there would be somebody there if somebody comes in in an emergency. Or are you wanting to do seven days a week, 8 hours a day or six days a week, 12-hour shifts. What is the direction of council? If we give dispatch to the county, do we want to keep those people that are there currently? We only have two full time dispatchers, so we are burning through a lot of overtime right now. If we are going to continue to keep it open 24 hours a day, then we need to go ahead and look at hiring versus if we are not, then we know to not look in that direction. I just wanted to have a discussion on this and have a timeline of what we are looking at and then figure out what council sees that it will look like down here after the transition happens.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, John. I am sure members of council has a lot of thoughts on this. We have Sheriff Heatt here and Jonathan Hankins. Sheriff, would you like to come at this time and speak and answer any questions that the council might have for you?

Sherriff Heatt- I'll answer any questions that you may have. Like Mr. O'Daniel said we did meet this morning and just to look at some of the different options and things. Just like it has already been said, it's a process that we are going to have to go through if we move forward with this. We also want to make sure we are doing it right and that we are doing it for what your needs are

and the way that you want, and also the way that the new Police Chief would want it to be. So, we had a good meeting this morning and I'm just here for any questions or to hear from you all.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Sherriff Hieatt. I will now open up the floor for discussion. Would anyone like to ask a question?

Doug- Could you give us an example of what Bluefield is doing? I think they only keep someone there from 8:00am-5:00pm?

Hieatt- They have two people that they keep there, and they are open 6 days a week from 8:00am till 6:00pm. They decided to stay open a little later in the evening for people when they get off work in case, they may need reports and things. Then on Saturdays for people who may be out of town during the week and things like that. So, they decided to do 6 days a week at a little longer hour as opposed to the Town of Tazewell, who does 5 days a week and just the 8 hours a day.

Doug- Okay, can you discuss, if we had no one there at night, can we get a box or something that would have a pager in it that someone could use to call 911 and have a police officer there in 1-2 minutes?

Hieatt- We talked about that earlier today, and none of the other departments had that. Bluefield talked about it, and I don't know what the reasons were on why they decided to not do it. I don't know if they decided that it wasn't wanted or maybe the price was too high, but Southwest College has just put in some boxes throughout the college, about seven of them, that when you push the button, it connects you to 911 and it's over the speakers. So, the 911 dispatcher says, "may help you?" and then they can say they need help or something like that. Then they dispatch out to wherever that box is. The Chief of Police at Southwest College said he would be happy to give us the company and any information we needed if that is something that the Town would want to look at. However, if that was put in place to me that would be the same as someone walking in the doors and someone inside hollering to a police officer. Now the time frame could be depending on what's going on in Town. If you have a drunk driver here and a domestic situation over here, but the dispatch would go right out for that officer to go to the building, but we are unsure of how much time would lapse because we are unsure of what would be going on at that time.

Doug- I think that is something that we make sure we have later on.

Hieatt- Okay, he said he would help us anyway he could and answer any questions we might have.

Kristen- Any idea how much each one of those cost?

Hieatt- No, I would have to ask him and get back with you all. I didn't even think about asking until we were in our meeting today.

Doug- I wouldn't think it would cost that much. Every one of my businesses, I can pull up my cameras on my phone and see what's going on and that's what I am envisioning that we do here, have a camera there and a box with a pager inside. So, we can take care of our people.

Seth- So, I'm assuming that once we get the new chief in there, then we can put a firmer plan in there with the transition and the timeline? Do you guys have any suggestions for us to help with some of the overtime? Or is it too early to be looking at that?

Hieatt- Until all of the things are completed as far as radio testing and everything being transferred over, until all that's done, if you did decide to not have anybody there in the evenings that couldn't happen until everything was completely done. As far as getting help with overtime, we have discussed a couple different options, one of them being contract labor. If you had somebody that could pick up an extra shift and they were willing to do that. We are also looking at ways we can shift some people around to try to help reduce overtime. Over the next couple months, it could add up with only having two full-time people there for the 24-hour coverage. So, we are looking at ways that we can shift people around and keep the original coverage.

John- I think it depends on the direction we get tonight from you all. We love our officers, but you could get some burnout when you are working your normal shift and then end up filling in for dispatch. Right now, I think if we could just let them know that we just need some help for a month or two. I think if you and I understand what the plan is it would help with a lot of that. We

talked this morning, and we are trying to shift some people around and finding ways to cover it to reduce the cost as much as possible.

Hieatt- We just have the two full-time dispatchers and if one of them are sick or something happens then that's a lot of hours that have to be covered to keep everything going. So, we did talk about that, and we have some dispatchers, some who live in this area that are BSEND certified who might want to come in and help on a short term basis until the process gets done to help with some of that overtime.

Seth- That's probably more economical than paying overtime.

Doug- I know to keep an officer down there, it is like \$340 a night.

Laura- I think the contract labor is a good idea. I think we need to speed that up to reduce that overtime. They are already trained with the emergency dispatch. I don't see any negative in that. I think the quicker we can do that the better. If we need a consensus or a vote. I think the quicker we can do that probably the better.

John- As long as we go under mutual aid. That is something you can look into a little further.

Hieatt- Right now, I can't say for 100% sure that we can do that with people because I wanted to wait until tonight to see what you all wanted to do before I talked to some of them. I can't say for sure that we would have people that would want to come and do that, but it may be an option that we can check and see.

Seth- Yes, please do that.

Mayor Cury- I'm trying to keep the discussion lively but also tame, Doug, did you want to say something?

Doug- Well I think we usually pay someone \$12 an hour to come and work, I think we should pay \$15 an hour. If you are making \$15 in Tazewell, you are not going to come and work here for \$12 an hour. I just think that would ensure someone to take those shifts.

Laura- I agree with you but I would think that would be something that John and the Sheriff can decide. I wouldn't think that should be something we say out loud.

Doug- Well, I'm just suggesting.

Hieatt- I think that is a good thought.

Seth- Just one more thing, can we go ahead and begin the warrants and file transfers? Because we know we are going this direction anyways, is that something we can go ahead and be working on?

Hieatt- There are some things we can be doing now like the radio checks and working on that. The first thing we have to do is send a request to the State Police because they are over the VCN and NIC and we would have to send a request to them to say that the Town has agreed, and we are moving forward to start the process of working out these things and get their approval. Those things can start now, yes.

Laura- Mr. O'Daniel would you prefer that we go ahead and make a motion to move dispatch over and you and the Sheriff work out all the details?

John- Sherriff Hieatt, would you need anything formal as a motion to get started on your end?

Hieatt- There are things we can do for a month that we wouldn't need anything formal to do that. Even if in a month, you change your mind, the process that we have done won't hurt anything.

Mayor Cury- Just to clarify, at this point you are saying that at this point you do not need a formal recommendation or resolution to get started, right?

John- Well, I just didn't know if we needed something formal to get things in place on what this is going to look like.

Mayor Cury- Okay, does anyone have any other questions for Sherriff Hieatt?

Rick- I have one. Are our radios compatible with yours?

Hieatt- From vehicle to vehicle they are not but from vehicle to dispatch, yes. We can dispatch out to all the units and their portables, yes.

That won't change no matter where dispatch is. Or how that goes won't change just because the radios are different but as far as the main dispatch it can still send out calls to the radios. Yes, that has been taken care of and it is compatible.

Rick- So, from this point on, we really need to go with the type of radios that you all are using?

Hieatt- In the future, if radios are bought and things have to be upgraded, that might would be a good move to buy the same radios that the other law enforcement has throughout the county.

Seth- We are the only agency that doesn't have that radio.

Kristen- When we had that discussion before we were talking about how there were a lot of different things that needed to be thought out. If you would have gone to Bluefield with us, you would have heard some discussion about the differences between the way their Police Station works. Their walk-in traffic is about 2 a day compared to 13-20 minimum down here. So, there are some things to think out there. I don't think one single box out there is going to work. If we are going to go to that then we need several all over Town, and I think it needs to be well publicized, so people know where to look for it at. I don't think it's reasonable to tell people that we can have a Police Officer to the Police Station in 3 minutes. As far as the Police themselves, we were talking about how we don't have the RAT packs like they do in Bluefield. We also talked about how the other places communicate a little bit better so that it bounces from their car to their radio and that we would need probably about 14 more of those at about \$2600 each. The radios were an issue. They definitely need to be upgraded. They are old, but when they were new, they were a little bit better radios then I think they are now.

Seth- Being around for a long time, the only thing that I would say to that would be we did try to get Richlands to buy the same radios when they bought them. They refused to do it.

Kristen- Were those not bought with grant?

Seth- We had it all worked out for everybody in the county to have the same radios and they did not want to do that at the time.

Kristen- Were those not bought with from a 2008 Homeland Security grant?

Seth- We had a grant that covered the entire county and they rejected and did not want it.

Laura- There was also a grant that I presented to the council, as a citizen, two years ago. It was the Virginia Information Technology or something like that. They offered to come in and help the Town of Richlands to buy new radios and the council at the time refused to do it, and we lost that grant. So, now we are at a point of how many times has the council said no to new radios but here we are. It has got to be dealt with one way or another. I don't disagree about the boxes; I think it is a really great idea to have them. We may could even have one by the post office and maybe at Critterville or something, and whatever that cost is going to look like. However, for a year the Police Department doors were locked 24 hours a day and nobody had any issue with that. Mr. Reynolds has also been in here asking for the RAT pack repeaters, if I'm not mistaken and has been denied and given a hard time over it. So, unfortunately, we are in a situation, and it is not going to be an ideal situation but once we get past the initial costs, we are going to start seeing the benefits.

Seth- Good news is, it is a brand-new day. Let John and the Sheriff and Mr. Hankins tell us what we need, how much we need, and we can move forward with that. The savings that we're going to gain in the long run are going to far exceed any cost that we would have to spend, even if we put these boxes in. I think that is a great idea, Kristen. It is something we probably have needed for years at Critterville anyway, and some of these places after dark. So, I think we can look at all those things and I think we are willing to do what we need to do to get us where we need to be to be safer. That is the whole purpose of our Police Force, our Fire and Rescue. We want this to be the best.

If you guys could work on a list for us over the next few weeks, that would be great. You guys figure out what we need and what the pricing is on it, then we can figure out how we are going to pay for it.

Mayor Cury- I think we have had several different opinions and discussions on this. So, from what I am hearing on this is that we are going to be moving forward with the 911, it is just a matter of how are we going to do that? We cannot micromanage the details from these chairs. I would put my faith in everyone involved directly with the 911 transfer. I feel that council would be advised to leave the details to those directly involved with the transfer.

Doug- I make a motion to move forward with the transfer to 911. Laura seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Hieatt- I just want to say one thing, I don't want anyone leaving tonight thinking that since we are transferring to 911 that we have to buy new radios. The radios that we have are compatible with what we are needing them to do. Also, we are always looking for new grants. We did get a smaller grant awarded to us for 8 new radios and we would be happy to use those but 8 wouldn't be enough to cover all the vehicles and things that we have. However, we are always look for new grants for things like that that would help us buy all new radios.

John- I would still like to have some direction on what this is going to look like. Are we going to stay open 24 hours or close down at night?

Mayor Cury- I would suggest that you come back with alternate plans rather than us sitting up here saying do this or do that. Because some of us want it open and some of us thinks it should be closed. I think that would be a discussion between you and Sherriff Hieatt and anyone else that is directly involved.

Laura- Heather, I would like to hear what you have to say. You look like you want to say something.

Heather- I just don't know how you want us to address this. We can't really address it without knowing what you want it to look like. Is it going to take two people, three people, or zero people.

Mayor Cury- Heather, what times? Two people or three people at what times?

Laura- I think what he is saying is you guys look at that and say okay if you're going to have one person in there 24 hours a day. You guys come back to us and say to fill that position for 24 hours a day, we are going to need eight people working three shifts... why are you shaking your head?

Heather- I don't understand why we are doing this then if that is the case. That is exactly what we have now.

Kristen- I thought they were going to find some help to try to fill in until we can...

Seth- Are you talking about in interim or are you talking about going forward?

Heather- Going forward. What do you want it to look like going forward?

Kristen- I don't know that we have enough information to make that decision yet. There is still radio testing that needs to be done, and we don't have a new Police Chief. I think for now it would be more beneficial to use some help to fill in the shift. I just think we need to think this through and do this in a nice, controlled way.

Laura- I can see both sides of this. I think what would be beneficial to me would be for you guys to come back at our next meeting and say, "if we keep this open, this is how many people we are going to need at this cost." Then come also come back with "this is how much money we would save if we closed it at this time." Then we would be able to look at it and weigh those opinions.

Mayor Cury- I think Laura and Kristen has both expressed this very well and money is very important, but safety should always be our main priority. Doug, did you have something to say?

Doug- All the other towns have kept someone there from 8:00am- 5:00pm. If you continue to stay open 24 hours a day, then there would be no reason to even go to 911. To me, that's ridiculous. Right now, we cannot keep people in dispatch, which is why we need to go to 911

and cut down on the overtime. Over the past years, we paid our officers overtime, sometimes it is \$340 for an officer to work overnight. That drains the budget. If we go to 911 like all the other towns in Virginia and run the hours of 8:00am-5:00pm or 8:00am-6:00p and have someone there not really to dispatch but to help with paperwork, and she could dispatch if she needed to. That is what you should look for in the future.

Heather- I just have concerns about the overtime. We are not running at full staff, which is why the overtime is so high. That is why I wanted to get some better direction, because the overtime is running in excess because we only have half of our Police Officers and staff.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Heather. You are looking at it from the business side of it, and I appreciate that. All towns are different, and I think that we need to come up with our own unique little plan.

Jeff- To me, I think this is a discussion that we need to have with our new Chief. I just don't want to put the buggy before the horse. The new Chief may have some new ideas that we haven't even thought of yet.

Seth- Just to give Heather some direction. Right now, I think let the sheriff reach out and try to find some people to fill in to stop this overtime. I agree with Jeff, I think the new Chief needs to be a part of that conversation. I also hear what Doug is saying and I agree with that as well. I don't think we need to be open all the time. We were closed down for a year and everybody was fine with that. However, there are some things that are going to have to take place for us to do that. I think in the county there are probably two different models: the Bluefield model, I think they have some Saturday hours as well and run their hours maybe 8:00am-5:00pm or something like that. Okay, so then you have the Tazewell model, and they have a different model. So, I think our model may not be exactly like either of those but similar.

Heather, I don't see us being open 24 hours a day. I don't think that is where we are going. I think that whoever they put in that position, may have more duties than just answering people who walk in off the street. I would imagine that you could find a better utilization for someone's time, talent, and abilities than to just sit there and watch the door. There are other things that need to be done and I'm sure there's lots of paperwork. This role is going to be different than just a dispatcher but if we are going to have someone there during those hours, and you guys can let us know what level of education, degree, skills, abilities, and whatever else you want the qualification to be in this job.

I agree with Jeff, I think this is going to be a little bit down the road. Once we get a new Chief in and that person can begin to decide how they want things to look like. However, in the interim, don't panic. I don't see us hiring another individual right now. I don't think that is the right choice. If we can have some folks that would fill in for us until we can get all this switched over, I think that will get us through this time. Does that help?

Heather- I mean, I guess. I just want to go back to what John had said and I just want to make sure that everybody is thinking about what this is going to look like in the future. Obviously, you would want the new Chief to be a part of that discussion and decision making. However, within the three months or less time, we would still like to know, and we think the people will desire to know what this is going to look like.

Mayor Cury- I am just going to be honest, we do not know either. We can be up here saying do this or do that, but we don't know either. It is going to take some creativity on everyone's part. Creating a new scene for all of us.

John- Our main concern right now is the overtime. The longer we have to drag this out the more overtime we are going to have to pay. I think when Heather and I looked at those numbers today, it kind of brought everything into prospective. I just want everyone to understand there is going to be a lot paid out in overtime until we make a decision.

Seth- We have already given you a decision.

Heather- I understand, but we still have to have it opened until everything is settled.

Seth- They are doing everything they can do. They can't go any faster. Let me just say it plainly, Dispatch is moving to the Sheriff's Department. From the consensus I see up here tonight, we are not going to be open 24 hours a day. Does that help?

Heather- I understand. I just want you all to understand, we are going to have to continue to pay overtime until all of this is resolved.

Seth- We understand. This is not a new problem. One of the big problems that we have is we are paying over \$100,000 in overtime last year and well on our way of paying over \$110,000 in overtime for this year. This is why we are where we are.

John- Okay, I just wanted to make sure everyone was on the same page.

Seth- Sure. No one is mad. We are where we are because of the situation.

Mayor Cury- John and Heather are you satisfied?

John- Yes. We will plan on having another discussion at our September meeting.

Mayor Cury- Okay, we are moving on to our next topic: Electric Battery Storage Discussion. We have Alice Wolfe and Garrett Cole here tonight to speak to us via zoom.

Alice- I just wanting to talk a little bit about Blue Ridge. It is a membership association with 9 communities and each one of those is an electric distribution utility just like Richlands is. So, each community has the responsibility to serve retail customers. The agency is funded entirely by member dues. We don't have any revenue on our power supply, and we wouldn't be affected if you choose not to participate in this project. Tonight, is a perfect example of the type of projects that Blue Ridge was founded for. The reason that the members created the agency is to get economies of scale and buying power and negotiating contracts. For anyone listening who might be new to the term "economies of scale" it just means that when you buy more at once, you get a better per unit price. If all the Blue Ridge members who are interested in this project would all move forward at the same time, the Richlands project would be about 112th of the total. So, we think that's a really nice benefit for a small community like Richlands to be able to participate in this larger project with the other communities. We are proposing to follow the same structure that Blue Ridge members have used in the past. So, the final contract would be directly between Richlands and the Battery Developer. I am familiar with the Town's power supply contracts, I help negotiate and administer them, but I am not actually party to the contracts. Blue Ridge does not sign on to them.

So, the number one reason we started this project last year is the AEP transmission rates. The transmission rates refer to those high voltage lines, those towers that you see when you are driving along highway. All of the Blue Ridge members are transmission dependent utilities, which means that no one has enough generation in Town to serve all of their retail customers. So, we need a strong transmission system. The challenge we are having here is that AEP's transmission rates have gone up so dramatically in the last 10 years. It has quadrupled. It is now about 25% of the Towns wholesale electric bill. So, we are really looking for some way to provide some cost control that will help keep your rates under control. I want to be very clear, and this is a big picture issue. It began before the pandemic, we really started to see the rates rise in earnest about 2014. So, this has been going on before the pandemic. It is not related to the supply chain shortages. It is not related to the inflation that we are seeing nowadays. It has been going on for a while and unfortunately, we think it is going to continue. I also want to be clear that everyone in Richlands pays these transmission rates. So, I understand that part of the Town's residents is served by AEP and part of them are served by the Town's Electric System. Everyone is paying these transmission rates. This project is for the Town's Electric System. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of easy ways to lower the transmission rates or lower those transmission costs. So, using a battery to lower the Town's peak, is going to be one of the best ways to do that.

Garrett and I both zoomed into your July council meeting, so just a little preview of what is different from that last meeting: cost benefit numbers, you'll see tonight are better than what they were presented in July. One of the main reasons for that is the Inflation Reduction Act that was passed by Congress and signed by President Biden just last week. So, that moved very quickly. This Act included a standalone tax credit for batteries, so that made a difference in these numbers and then Garrett will talk a little bit more about some other opportunities the developers

are bringing to us. So, I will turn this this presentation over to Garrett, I look forward to hearing your guy's thoughts and questions.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Alice. Garrett?

Garrett- Good Evening, everyone. Thank you, Alice. I just wanted to go over where we are at. I think from our last discussion in July this is a positive note for how cost has reduced like Alice just mentioned.

We are looking at a location that would hold a 2-megawatt battery. The 2-megawatt would last 2 hours and then it would have to charge back up. The term of our interest would be for 15 years by contract in Summer of 2024. This is consistent with all the others in the project. We are looking at consistent timelines. While Richlands is looking at a smaller size compared to the others, they are participating in the Global Economy across the entire Blue Ridge group.

As some of you that have been on the council for a while now will notice that this rate at 9.24 per kilowatt month continue to increase, and we estimate the rate will hit double digits by 2023. This type of projects is one of the ways that we can mitigate that to avoid transmission cost.

How are we using this project to save money for the Town? We experience the cost of AEP transmission which is clearly our focus here. It shows a rate above \$10 in 2023 and it escalates out into the future over the 15-year term that we're talking about. That is the rate that continues to escalate the cost that we anticipate avoiding with the battery. Our annual reduction cost using the battery is worth \$300,000 per year. We also have that PJM capacity component in the market that we would also offset. We are being very conservative in the way we look at that cost. So, these are the two primary components of cost that we are trying to avoid with this project.

Again, why are we here? This is an opportunity to avoid transmission cost. We are using the battery to avoid higher transmission cost. So, our conclusions are: Our Economics are favorable and provide a net benefit. They have improved significantly since we talked to you guys in July. Also, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. It is an opportunity for Richlands to take an additional 10% provision. Our plan is to negotiate our final agreement as we go through September. The goal would be to follow up with you guys with a recommendation and let you guys know how the negotiating is going on the final agreement. We will also be looking for the council's decision with the intentions of being done with it by September.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Garrett and Alice. I will open this to council for any questions that they might have.

Doug- Can the 2 hours offset the majority of the peaks like in the summertime?

Garrett- We have about an 85% success rate for hitting those peaks. You can marginally approve that success rate by having a longer duration, but you pay a lot more in cost to have a longer duration. We also have the flexibility to run the battery at less if we need to gain an additional duration in the future. Based on our research the 2 hours have been enough to hit the winter and summer peaks. We see a pretty high success rate in doing that and feel strongly about the 2 hours working in our favor.

Mayor Cury- Garrett and Alice thank you very much for coming and speaking to us tonight. You guys have a wonderful evening, and we will see you again in September.

John, on the agenda it says we need to have Executive/Closed Session to speak about the contract negotiation. Do we need to do that tonight?

John- No, they were able to present it in a way that we didn't need to go into Closed Session. We may have to do that at our next meeting in September.

Mayor Cury- Okay, thank you. Next, we are on Iron Street Property Update and Discussion with Karen Weber.

Karen- I am new to the Department of Environmental Health, but I am not new to the work. I have a geologist degree and I have done this type of work for years and years. I have seen this site and the data on it. I am sure that you guys here are more familiar with the actual site than I am, but hopefully I can help answer any questions that you may have about it.

John- So, essentially this is a property we have talked about for 14 to 20 years. They have been working on for several years. We talked about it several months ago and it kind of got put on the back burner with some other things that came up, that took priority. There has been a little bit more movement from the current property owner with the transition. Also, the new members of council coming along that were not here when we had those discussions before, and I wanted to have somebody coming from DEQ and give an overview of the property. I just wanted them to let everyone know what the issues were, how it's been addressed, and what the potential is for your future steps. If this is something that we choose to take on and try to get something developed there? So that is why I asked them to come here and present a general overview and then allow you all to ask any questions about the property before a decision is made on how the Town would like to move forward or not at this time.

Karen- So, you all know me, my name is Karen Weber, and I am a Senior Remediation Officer that's my job title. I actually work under the voluntary mediation program. So, we are assigned sites and they are ours to take from start to finish or in our case, when people leave or retire and somebody new comes on, we take over those sites. Our job is not to recreate everything that's been done before, but to make sure that what has been done is appropriate and allows us to move forward making decisions.

So, when we took over this site a lot the buildings were already gone but thankfully, we had a lot of maps and were able to identify where the battery storage, the waste disposal, and where the maintenance shops were. So, even though a site doesn't have buildings or might look flat or vacant we still can identify the high potential areas. Those areas where there is more likely to be impact. So, we look at it as, did they address all of those? Did they account for all of those? However, there are some things that are unknown. Thankfully, we had a lot of information and a lot of history about this site. The other things that we look at is, what are the site characteristics? The geology and the soil types, and the water and where does the water move underground and where does it move on the surface. Those all tell us where things are going to go and once we know what compounds we might have or metals we might have, we can then figure out where they might go. If you have the horror of PCBs, it's going to park itself and stay relatively immobile unless there's wind or water that moves it along. If you have something like a volatile compound that might be from petroleum source, it's probably underground already and probably released underground. It is going to move a certain way and it's going to move at a certain speed and it's going to degrade in a certain way. So, all of those things are taken into consideration and sometimes that's why we do an assessment.

Based on everything that I saw it has been a collaborative effort with the consultant, the owner, and the Town. With us, there has been dialogue all along, but it does kind of start, stop, start, and stop. So, the plant operation goes from the early 1960s - 1992ish and the buildings started coming down about 1994. That is what we have in our site history. So, the initial environmental assessments that we have that we've seen are from 1999-2002. That kicked off and eventually started the enrollment in the voluntary remediation program and so not all of the traction are in there. We had 1, 3 and 4 entered the program in 2007. Track 2 had a little bit of petroleum impact from a petroleum. That piece was not eligible for further evaluation under the voluntary program. So, once that was resolved to the satisfaction of the petroleum group, it then became eligible for continuation under the voluntary remediation program and further evaluate the benefit to our program. It's not a regulatory program, it's kind of a guided program and in the end, we accept the work that's been done. We accept the evaluation and look at their risk assessment. Did they consider all possibilities? Did they collect enough samples? Did they propose mitigation or remediation that protects the human health and the environment? Then when it's done, they get enforcement immunity so someone else isn't going to come back and then put the regulatory hand over top of the site. You have some protections just by having gone through the voluntary mediation program.

So, we started with some site characterization and risk assessment and at that point it started to get noticed and as so many of you know, the health department got involved. There was some public concern and so there was a public health assessment done. That is not normal, but it does happen on some of these sites and in this instance the VDH did come in and work with the DEQ and under the program and help evaluate that risk for human health and potential risks from prior use and exposures. So, that happened relatively quick from 2013 to 2014. Then it stopped a little bit again picked back up in 2017.

Now we're going to start with the site characterization: What do we have? What's in the soil? What's in the groundwater? What might be in the vapor? What might be in the stream? What might be in the stream sediment? What can people touch? Then we are going to take that data and put it into a risk assessment and that is usually quantitative. So, it's statistics. Once we have a risk assessment that says the pathway from the soil to a child playing on playground is evident then we would say now we need to do a remedial action that addresses that possibility and how do we protect it. That's the process through the VRP. Ultimately, once we have a remedial action plan that we accept and are in agreement with, they will implement it. Once it's implemented then we will issue a certification of satisfactory completion of remedial actions and at that point it is done with the VRP and moves on to the next step. So, we went back and forth a little bit and the reason I put all this detail up is not to make it look like there's a lot of work that's been done, but it has been a long process and there have been a lot of eyes on it and there has been a lot of sampling that's been done. Again, we reached 2020, the end of 2020 and things picked back up. So, now the ball is rolling again. I think you have an owner who's motivated to get through this and get it finished and they are very close to getting it finished. The goal of all of that is just to say we are moving along and almost to that point of implementing their remedial actions. We have reviewed the plan that they have now and had some dialogue. We just have a few things to clarify, and they are going to start with their site work. So, again they looked at soil, they looked at groundwater, they looked at the surface water, the Clinch river, and the water moving across the site in that swale, they look at sediment, and they look at vapor migration. For this site, we compare it to both the commercial, industrial uses, and residential screening levels. There are residential properties nearby and we wanted to keep the door open for possible redevelopment of the site under all scenarios. It doesn't mean everything could go there, like I wouldn't put a community garden on this site, but there are other things that you could do with this site that would be beneficial.

When we looked at the water, we looked at drinking water standards even though everyone around the site is connected to public water and sewer. We also looked at surface water quality and even ecological risk because the Clinch river is a sensitive habitat. So, all of those things were considered. I think there were 90 groundwater samples taken overtime. There might even be more than that. There is vapor samples, some sediment and stream sampling, and some sample taken along the river. So, a lot of the things that we found were isolated and not site wide. We are not seeing widespread lead in the soil. We are seeing pockets of high concentration lead, where if you go back to the site history there may have been battery storage or disposal units that are stored there, and it makes sense. When we got to the remedial action consideration, we were really looking at two things: we looked at volatile compounds and semi-volatile compounds. As I mentioned before, there was some petroleum work. So, we're looking at things that are petroleum based, things that are solvent based, and all sorts of operation chemicals that may have been stored or used or generated on site. We also looked at heavy metals and the two things that stood out as still being present are some volatile organic compounds in the groundwater and lead impacts in the soil. Both of those, as I mentioned are isolated. So, we're not seeing VOCs in all the wells but we are seeing them in over places, and we're not seeing lead across the site but we are seeing it in some areas. So, all of the things we are looking at are what types of things are a concern, how it might move through the site, and how it might impact the site moving forward.

They have remedial actions planned as protective measures. We intend to put a groundwater use restriction on all four tracks of the VRP site. So, even if a commercial or industrial facility were to build there, they wouldn't be able to use the groundwater for process water and that would eliminate the possibility for contact. They would be able to tie into the public water system. The properties in the vicinity are connected to public water and sewer and that was also key when the health department came out and said, you are not drinking the water, and you are not using it in your garden, your potential to come in contact with this is negligible to low. The nature of the compounds is at such a low risk, or it will degrade quickly overtime or degrade to such a degree or migrate or it's not flowing towards you. All of those things were taken into consideration. It is not typical we see industrial sites like this.

Again, we might have almost 100 soil samples, but we can't get every single spot. So, we will have some sort of soil management control put restrictions on how deep they can go but try to make it in a way that is not so restrictive that if you have to do a water line fix in an emergency that it holds up. So, there will be some caveats in there that people will just need to be aware

from health and safety standpoint. However, for the most part, we would just say, don't go digging around Willy Nilly. At this point, it's considered that there might be a residential use restriction at the site. That doesn't mean that it could never be residential. So, if you wanted to put a multifamily structure on there, it would just be a dialogue with the DEQ. Like where are you going to put that building? Where are you going to put the parking? Why don't we shift it here, so the parking covers this groundwater area where there might be vapor or you install a vapor mitigation system just to be protective. There are mechanisms to still consider other possible redevelopment uses, but that is one of the things that we are still going back and forth on.

So, for us the next step, we are going to confirm some groundwater controls. We are talking about site use restrictions. We then will issue a formal letter that says we accept your remedial actions, and they will then implement it primarily. When I say implement, that means by the fall they want to be moving that lead impacted soil out and off the site. Then we will issue that certification. Then, you guys can consider your acquisition plans, identify some redevelopment options, and think about what your desires are for this site or site uses or if there are other options that you guys want to consider or other development interest.

From the VRP standpoint, we feel that the site has been well characterized. They have taken into consideration the full site history and there's been a lot of work done. I can't tell you whether or not to buy the property, but I can speak about the work that has been done to the site.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Karen. This has been discussed for years and this is the best it has ever been explained. Does anyone have any questions for Karen?

Laura- I know I am new to the council, but I am lost. Are we buying this or is it being donated?

John- We didn't get that far in the negotiation. As I understand, it would be a donation. I think they are trying to get it off their books.

Laura- Do you have plans for this site?

John- There has been a couple different ideas that I have been tossing around. We haven't really settled on anything. So, it is kind of a question of do we want to take it on with the potential environmental concerns? If we do want to take it on, there has been some discussions about either using it for the public works garage. To get it moved from downtown or potentially use it to try to recruit a business to develop a site there.

Laura- If we did that then we would be selling the land then to a business?

John- Essentially, we would sell it. That would be up for discussion. It could be used as an incentive to get a business here.

Mayor Cury- Laura, to add to your question and answer, based on what she's saying by purchasing or accepting the property, we are also accepting all the liabilities that come with it. Is that correct?

Karen- That is correct. However, with the VRP program, there is that enforcement immunity to the site and you would still have that opportunity to do your own due diligence review before you take over complete ownership. Both those things will be protective of your liabilities.

Seth- Okay, I feel a lot better about this site since this presentation. Do you all present a certificate or something we can look at to see what and all has been done to this site.

Karen- There is a certificate. It is a certification of satisfactory completion of remedial actions and that is the stamp that says we reviewed everything leading up to their remedial actions, and we agreed to what they plan to do. Some of those are just deed restrictions, like don't use the groundwater. Some of them are remove the infected soil. All of those are memorialized in that certificate.

Seth- I feel like a better option for us, if the goal for this is to make it a site or for someone to potentially put a business there, maybe we just help the owner facilitate that by seeking out a business. However, in that scenario, the town would never have to take ownership. We find someone who wants to come in and they are willing to do this. That makes it a lot more

seamless for us. Now if we are going to use the site or a portion of the site for something for the Town's needs, then that is different.

John- The only thing would be to make it more attractive. They are willing to donate to us because we're municipality versus an industry.

Seth- Okay, maybe we buy an option for a dollar for a year while we seek out and see what we are going to do and maybe we sign an option agreement with them for a year.

John- Definitely could be an option.

Mayor Cury- Thank you, Karen so much for coming, I hope you have a safe trip back to Blacksburg.

Laura- Do you have an interested party in this site?

John- No.

Mayor Cury- Is there any other business that needs to be brought before the council?

John- Excuse me, Mayor. Is there any direction on what the council wants to do with this site?

Mayor Cury- I think we should wait until they do their final report and get back to us and then we can make our decision.

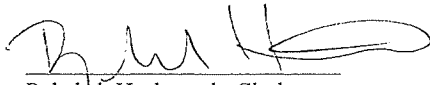
John- Okay, that's fine.

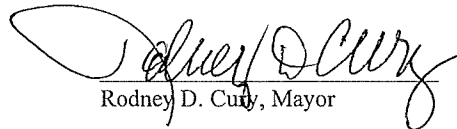
Mayor Cury- There being no further business tonight, I will ask for a motion to adjourn.

Kristen- I make a motion to adjourn this meeting. Seth seconded the motion.

Mayor Cury- We have a motion and a second, any further discussion? All those in favor of the motion say yes. All those that oppose say no. Roll Call- Doug- Yes, Jeff- Yes, Rick- Yes, Kristen- Yes, Seth- Yes, Laura- Yes. Motion carries -6/0.

Adjourned!!


Rebekah Hackworth, Clerk


Rodney D. Cury, Mayor